

*Testimony Supporting***SB 284: An Act Increasing The Age From Eight to Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status.**

The Human Services Committee
March 10, 2022

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Sana Shah, and I am testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that one day Connecticut is a thriving and equitable state where all children achieve their full potential.

Connecticut Voices for Children is testifying in support of SB 284: An Act Increasing The Age From Eight to Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status, which will expand HUSKY's eligibility to be inclusive to all immigrant children regardless of status, and thus, will help equalize access to health care coverage and help reduce the uninsured rate in Connecticut. SB 284 is a critical step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need, but Connecticut can further strengthen healthcare rights by opening access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults; the health of parents is inextricably tied to the health of their children.

Connecticut's most marginalized and disenfranchised communities, particularly low-income families and people of color, are more likely to be exposed to adverse social determinants of health—such as food insecurity, limited access to transportation, and housing instability;¹ included among these individuals are immigrant residents. Research tells us that a lack of access to health coverage and inequities in health care leads to poor health outcomes.² Coverage gaps raise healthcare costs for both hospitals and the community from delayed patient care-seeking, which also can cause worse patient outcomes. This makes managing their chronic health conditions and accessing preventive care difficult. Because they are largely excluded from Connecticut's health insurance system, immigrant families are in a particularly unique position of vulnerability under the pandemic. Providing coverage to our immigrant residents, which comprise a large population of our essential workers, is necessary for our state to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Immigrants make incredible contributions to our state and disproportionately serve in the riskiest jobs, but are consistently punished and denied access to human rights such as basic health care because of their legal status. A high percentage of the roughly 120,000 immigrants in CT still do not have any form of health insurance coverage because of their status, even though they pay state and federal taxes and contribute to the state's health programs. In fact, immigrants in our state pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year, 253 million into federal taxes, out of that 54.6 million goes into medicare, and 207.4 million goes into social

security.³ Immigrant taxpayers help fund programs, such as HUSKY health; therefore, they should have coverage. They're also valuable members of our communities that have shouldered a public health crisis with virtually no state support.⁴ Most of all, all residents, irrespective of immigration status, deserve high-quality healthcare without worrying about a lack of insurance coverage. SB 284 will save lives, reduce healthcare costs, and lead to better health outcomes for the state's residents.

Connecticut Voices for Children urges the committee to pass **SB 284: An Act Increasing The Age From Eight to Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status** and work towards expanding access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sana Shah
Chief of Staff
Connecticut Voices for Children

¹ "Healthy People 2020: Social Determinants of Health," Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved from <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>.

² Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Understanding and Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care. (2002). *Unequal treatment: confronting racial and ethnic disparities in health care*. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US)

³ 4 The Contributions of New Americans in Connecticut." New American Economy Research Fund, n.d. <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-connecticut/>

⁴ (2020). *Issue Briefing Book: 2020-2022*. Connecticut Voices for Children. Retrieved from: <https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Issue-Briefing-Book-2020-Final-Abridged-Version.pdf>.